

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION FOR

HOST TO FPGA INTERFACE IN AN IN-CIRCUIT EMULATION SYSTEM

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5 **HOST TO FPGA INTERFACE IN AN IN-CIRCUIT EMULATION SYSTEM**
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9 **CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED DOCUMENTS**
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11 This application is related to U.S. Patent Application Serial No.
12 _____, docket number CYPR-CD00182, to Warren Snyder, et al., entitled
13 "IN-SYSTEM CHIP EMULATOR ARCHITECTURE"; and to U.S. Patent Application
14 Serial No. _____, docket number CYPR-CD00183, to Warren Snyder,
15 entitled "CAPTURING TEST/EMULATION AND ENABLING REAL-TIME
16 DEBUGGING USING AN FPGA FOR IN-CIRCUIT EMULATION"; and to U.S. Patent
17 Application Serial No. _____, docket number CYPR-CD00185, to Warren
18 Snyder, et al., entitled "EMULATOR CHIP/BOARD ARCHITECTURE AND
19 INTERFACE"; and to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. _____, docket
20 number CYPR-CD00186, to Warren Snyder, et al., entitled "METHOD FOR
21 BREAKING EXECUTION OF (TEST) CODE IN A DUT AND EMULATOR CHIP
22 ESSENTIALLY SIMULTANEOUSLY AND HANDLING COMPLEX BREAKPOINT
23 EVENTS". Each of these applications is filed on the same date as the present
24 application and is hereby incorporated by reference as though disclosed fully
25 herein. This application is also related to and claims priority benefit under 35
26 U.S.C. §119(e) of provisional patent application serial no. 60/243,708 filed October
27 26, 2000 to Snyder, et al. entitled "Advanced Programmable Microcontroller Device"
28 which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.
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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to the field of In Circuit Emulation. More particularly, this invention relates to methods and apparatus for communication between a host processor and a Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) used as a virtual device under test.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In-circuit emulation (ICE) has been used by software and hardware developers for a number of years as a development tool to emulate the operation of complex circuit building blocks and permit diagnosis and debugging of hardware and software. Such in-circuit emulation is most commonly used currently to analyze and debug the behavior of complex devices such as microcontrollers and microprocessors that have internal structures that are far too complex to readily model using computer simulation software alone.

FIGURE 1 illustrates an exemplary conventional in-circuit emulation arrangement 100 used to model, analyze and debug the operation of a microcontroller device. In this arrangement, a host computer (e.g., a personal computer) 110 is connected to a debug logic block 120 which is further connected to a special version of the microcontroller device that has been developed specially for use in emulation. Operational instructions are loaded from the host computer 110 through the debug logic 120 to the special version of the microcontroller 130. The debug logic 120 monitors operation of the microcontroller 130 as the

1 instructions are executed. Depending upon the application, this operation may be
2 monitored while the special version of the microcontroller 130 is interconnected
3 with the circuitry that is intended to interface a production version of the
4 microcontroller in the finished product under development. Such interconnection
5 may be via simulation within host computer 110 or as actual circuitry or some
6 combination thereof. As the circuit is stepped through its operation, the debug
7 logic gathers information about the state of various components of the
8 microcontroller 130 during operation and feeds that information back to the host
9 computer 110 for analysis.

10 During the course of the analysis, various trace information such as time
11 stamps, register values, data memory content, etc. may be logged in the host
12 computer 110 for analysis and debugging by the designer. Additionally, it is
13 generally the case that various break points can be defined by the designer that
14 cause the program to halt execution at various points in the operation to permit
15 detailed analysis. Other debugging tools may also be provided to enable the user
16 to debug the operation of the circuit.

17 In-circuit emulation systems such as 100 have a number of disadvantages
18 and limitations. In earlier systems, the microcontroller 130 might have been simply
19 the production version of the microcontroller itself with no special debugging
20 features. In such systems, the information that can be gathered by the ICE system
21 100 is limited to that which is available at the pinouts of the microcontroller 130 (or
22 which can be extracted from the microcontroller using clever programming or
23 special coding supported by the processor).

24 Enhancements to such early systems provided the microcontroller or other
25 processor with an array of built-in debugging tools that use standard pins on the
26 part and built-in instructions that facilitated in-circuit emulation. In such enhanced
27 processors, the emulation tools are integrated into the part and thus become a
28 design constraint for developing and improving the part. Thus, support for the
29 debugging instruction code and the like can increase the cost and complexity of the
30 circuit.

1 Newer systems often use a so-called “bond-out” microcontroller. A bond-out
2 version of the microcontroller is a version of the production microcontroller that has
3 been designed with special wirebonding pads on the chip that are not normally
4 connected in the production wirebonding. The bond-out version connects these
5 pads to pins on the microcontroller package to permit access to otherwise
6 inaccessible points of the circuit to facilitate debugging. This technique is in
7 common use, but has the disadvantage of imposing significant limitations on the
8 circuit layout to permit space and circuitry associated with the special wirebonding
9 pads. Additionally, it is usually the case that substantial interface circuitry and
10 other special circuitry to facilitate the debugging and bond-out has to be added to
11 the circuit. This increases the complexity, size, power consumption and potentially
12 reduces the yield of the production part. Moreover, development resources are
13 required to lay out the bond-out circuitry and pads and do associated design of
14 such bond-out circuitry. Additionally, instruction code must generally be provided
15 and supported for such an implementation. Such resources may have to be
16 applied with every updated version of the part and may significantly impact speed,
17 cost or flexibility in development of improved versions of the part.

18 A third technique, one that is used in the Pentium™ and Pentium Pro™
19 series of microprocessors available from Intel Corporation, provides a special
20 “probe mode” of operation of the processor. When the processor is placed in this
21 probe mode, a number of internal signals are routed to a “debug port” for use by the
22 in-circuit emulation system. This debug port is used to permit the in-circuit
23 emulation system to communicate with the processors at all times and, when
24 placed in probe mode, to read otherwise inaccessible probe points within the
25 processor. Of course, providing such a probe mode requires significant design
26 resources to design in all such probe and debug functions and associated
27 instruction code support into the standard processor. This, of course, increases
28 development cost, chip complexity and chip size. Moreover, such facilities become
29 a part of the processor design which must be carried through and updated as
30 required as enhancements to the original design are developed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a communication interface between a host processor and an FPGA. Objects, advantages and features of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon consideration of the following detailed description of the invention.

In one embodiment consistent with the present invention a multi-purpose interface between a host computer and an FPGA uses an IEEE 1284 compliant EPP mode connection. When the host computer is initialized, a reset of the FPGA is carried out to clear the configuration memory of the FPGA. The data lines of the interface are then used to communicate unidirectional configuration data into the FPGA. The data are clocked by the host computer using the data strobe signal line to clock data into the FPGA. When the FPGA has been fully programmed, including programming an IEEE 1284 compliant EPP mode interface into the FPGA, the data lines are used for bidirectional communication between the host computer and the configured FPGA, in this embodiment operating as a virtual microcontroller. This advantageously provides for a single interface that can be used both for programming the FPGA and follow up communication with the programmed FPGA.

A method of programming a field programmable gate array (FPGA), consistent with certain embodiments of the invention, includes providing an FPGA having connections for configuration programming data, a configuration clock and reset; connecting data, data strobe and initialize lines of a specified interface from a host computer to the FPGA's connections for configuration programming data, configuration clock and reset respectively; the host asserting the reset to clear the configuration memory; the host clocking configuration data over the data lines into the FPGA using the data strobe line to clock the configuration clock, the configuration data incorporating design parameters for the specified interface so that the FPGA, once programmed, incorporates the specified interface; and conducting bidirectional communications between the host computer and the configured FPGA using the specified interface.

1 Another method of programming a field programmable gate array (FPGA),
2 consistent with certain embodiments of the invention includes providing an FPGA
3 having connections for configuration programming data, a configuration clock and
4 reset; connecting data, data strobe and INIT lines of an IEEE 1284 connection from
5 a host computer to the FPGA's connections for configuration programming data,
6 configuration clock and reset respectively; the host asserting the reset to clear the
7 configuration memory; the host clocking configuration data over the data lines into
8 the FPGA using the data strobe line to clock the configuration clock, the
9 configuration data incorporating design parameters for an IEEE 1284 interface so
10 that the FPGA once programmed, incorporates an IEEE 1284 interface; and
11 conducting bidirectional IEEE 1284 compliant communications between the host
12 computer and the configured FPGA.

13 Another method of programming a field programmable gate array (FPGA)
14 consistent with certain embodiments of the invention includes providing an FPGA
15 having connections for configuration programming data, a configuration clock and
16 reset; connecting data, data strobe and initialize lines of a specified interface from
17 a host computer to the FPGA's connections for configuration programming data,
18 configuration clock and reset respectively; the FPGA receiving a reset signal to
19 clear the configuration memory; the FPGA receiving configuration data over the
20 data lines, the configuration data incorporating design parameters for the specified
21 interface so that the FPGA, once programmed, incorporates the specified interface;
22 and conducting bidirectional communications using the specified interface.

23 Another method of programming a field programmable gate array (FPGA)
24 consistent with certain embodiments of the invention includes communicating over
25 a communication interface to configure the FPGA to function according to a
26 programmed configuration; and carrying out communications over the
27 communication interface to the FPGA functioning according to the programmed
28 configuration.

29 Another method of communicating with a field programmable gate array
30 (FPGA), consistent with certain embodiments of the invention includes a host

1 computer communicating over a communication interface to configure the FPGA
2 to act as a virtual microcontroller; executing instructions on a microcontroller device
3 in synchronization with the virtual microcontroller; and the host computer
4 communicating with the FPGA using the same communication interface used to
5 configure the FPGA.

6 Another method of communication with a field programmable gate array
7 (FPGA), consistent with certain embodiments of the invention includes connecting
8 a host computer to the FPGA using a communication interface; programming a
9 configuration into the FPGA, the configuration incorporating an implementation of
10 the communication interface; and carrying out non-programming communication
11 between the host computer and the FPGA using the communication interface.

12 The above summaries are intended to illustrate exemplary embodiments of
13 the invention, which will be best understood in conjunction with the detailed
14 description to follow, and are not intended to limit the scope of the appended
15 claims.
16

17 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

18 The features of the invention believed to be novel are set forth with
19 particularity in the appended claims. The invention itself however, both as to
20 organization and method of operation, together with objects and advantages
21 thereof, may be best understood by reference to the following detailed description
22 of the invention, which describes certain exemplary embodiments of the invention,
23 taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

24 **FIGURE 1** is a block diagram of a conventional In-Circuit Emulation system.

25 **FIGURE 2** is a block diagram of an exemplary In-Circuit Emulation system
26 consistent with certain microcontroller embodiments of the present invention.

27 **FIGURE 3** is an illustration of the operational phases of an In-Circuit
28 Emulation system consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

1 **FIGURE 4** is an illustration of the operational phases of an In-Circuit
2 Emulation system consistent with an embodiment of the present invention viewed
3 from a virtual microcontroller perspective.

4 **FIGURE 5** is a timing diagram useful in understanding an exemplary data
5 and control phase of operation of certain embodiments of the present invention.

6 **FIGURE 6** is a block diagram isolating the host to FPGA interface consistent
7 with an embodiment of the present invention

8 **FIGURE 7** is a flow chart describing the operation of the host to FPGA
9 interface in an embodiment consistent with the present invention.

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11 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

12 In the following detailed description of the present invention, numerous
13 specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the
14 present invention. However, it will be recognized by one skilled in the art that the
15 present invention may be practiced without these specific details or with
16 equivalents thereof. In other instances, well known methods, procedures,
17 components, and circuits have not been described in detail as not to unnecessarily
18 obscure aspects of the present invention.

19

20 NOTATION AND NOMENCLATURE

21 Some portions of the detailed descriptions which follow are presented in
22 terms of procedures, steps, logic blocks, processing, and other symbolic
23 representations of operations on data bits that can be performed on computer
24 memory. These descriptions and representations are the means used by those
25 skilled in the data processing arts to most effectively convey the substance of their
26 work to others skilled in the art. A procedure, computer executed step, logic block,
27 process, etc., is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence
28 of steps or instructions leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring
29 physical manipulations of physical quantities.

1 Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical
2 or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and
3 otherwise manipulated in a computer system. It has proven convenient at times,
4 principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values,
5 elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, or the like.

6 It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these and similar terms are
7 to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient
8 labels applied to these quantities. Unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent
9 from the following discussions, it is appreciated that throughout the present
10 invention, discussions utilizing terms such as "processing" or "transferring" or
11 "executing" or "determining" or "instructing" or "issuing" or "halting" or "clearing" or
12 the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar
13 electronic computing device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as
14 physical (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and
15 memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the
16 computer system memories or registers or other such information storage,
17 transmission or display devices.

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19 **HOST TO FPGA INTERFACE IN AN IN-CIRCUIT EMULATION SYSTEM IN**
20 **ACCORDANCE WITH THE INVENTION**

21 While this invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms,
22 there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail specific
23 embodiments, with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be
24 considered as an example of the principles of the invention and not intended to limit
25 the invention to the specific embodiments shown and described. In the description
26 below, like reference numerals are used to describe the same, similar or
27 corresponding parts in the several views of the drawings.

28 A commercial ICE system utilizing the present invention is available from
29 Cypress Micro Systems, Inc., for the CY8C25xxx/26xxx series of microcontrollers.

1 Detailed information regarding this commercial product is available from Cypress
2 Micro Systems, Inc., 22027 17th Avenue SE, Suite 201, Bothell, WA 98021 Bothell,
3 WA in the form of version 1.11 of "PSoC Designer: Integrated Development
4 Environment User Guide", which is hereby incorporated by reference. While the
5 present invention is described in terms of an ICE system for the above exemplary
6 microcontroller device, the invention is equally applicable to other complex circuitry
7 including microprocessors and other circuitry that is suitable for analysis and
8 debugging using in-circuit emulation. Moreover, the invention is not limited to the
9 exact implementation details of the exemplary embodiment used herein for
10 illustrative purposes.

11 Referring now to **FIGURE 2**, an architecture for implementation of an
12 embodiment of an ICE system of the present invention is illustrated as system 200.
13 In system 200, a Host computer 210 (e.g., a personal computer based on a
14 Pentium™ class microprocessor) is interconnected (e.g., using a standard PC
15 interface 214 such as a parallel printer port connection, a universal serial port
16 (USB) connection, etc.) with a base station 218. The host computer 210 generally
17 operates to run an ICE computer program to control the emulation process and
18 further operates in the capacity of a logic analyzer to permit a user to view
19 information provided from the base station 218 for use in analyzing and debugging
20 a system under test or development.

21 The base station 218 is based upon a general purpose programmable
22 hardware device such as a gate array configured to function as a functionally
23 equivalent "virtual microcontroller" 220 (or other device under test (DUT)). This is
24 accomplished using an associated integral memory 222 which stores program
25 instructions, data, trace information and other associated information. Thus, the
26 base station is configured as an emulator of the internal microprocessor portion of
27 the microcontroller 232. In preferred embodiments, a field programmable gate
28 array FPGA (or other programmable logic device) is configured to function as the
29 virtual microcontroller 220. The FPGA and virtual microcontroller 220 will be
30 referred to interchangeably herein. The base station 218 is coupled (e.g., using a

1 four wire interface 226) to a standard production microcontroller 232 mounted in a
2 mounting device referred to as a "pod". The pod, in certain embodiments, provides
3 connections to the microcontroller 232 that permit external probing as well as
4 interconnection with other circuitry as might be used to simulate a system under
5 development.

6 The FPGA of the base station 218 of the current embodiment is designed
7 to emulate the core processor functionality (microprocessor functions, Arithmetic
8 Logic Unit functions and RAM and ROM memory functions) of the Cypress
9 CY8C25xxx/26xxx series microcontrollers. The CY8C25xxx/26xxx series of
10 microcontrollers also incorporates I/O functions and an interrupt controller as well
11 as programmable digital and analog circuitry. This circuitry need not be modeled
12 using the FPGA 220. Instead, the I/O read information, interrupt vectors and other
13 information can be passed to the FPGA 220 from the microcontroller 232 over the
14 interface 226 as will be described later.

15 In order to minimize the need for any special ICE related functions on the
16 microcontroller 232 itself, the FPGA 220 and associated circuitry of the base station
17 218 are designed to operate functionally in a manner identically to that of
18 the microprocessor portion of the production microcontroller, but to provide for access
19 to extensive debug tools including readout of registers and memory locations to
20 facilitate traces and other debugging operations.

21 The base station 218's virtual microcontroller 220 operates to execute the
22 code programmed into the microcontroller 232 in lock-step operation with the
23 microcontroller 232. Thus, the actual microcontroller 232 is freed of any need to
24 provide significant special facilities for ICE, since any such facilities can be
25 provided in the virtual microcontroller 220. The base station 218's virtual
26 microcontroller 220 and microcontroller 232 operate together such that I/O reads
27 and interrupts are fully supported in real time. The combination of real and virtual
28 microcontroller behave just as the microcontroller 232 would alone under normal
29 operating conditions. I/O reads and interrupt vectors are transferred from the
30 microcontroller 232 to the base station 218 as will be described later. Base station

1 218 is then able to provide the host computer 210 with the I/O reads and interrupt
2 vectors as well as an array of information internal to the microcontroller 232 within
3 memory and register locations that are otherwise inaccessible.

4 In the designing of a microcontroller other complex circuit such as the
5 microcontroller 232, it is common to implement the design using the Verilog™
6 language (or other suitable language). Thus, it is common that the full functional
7 design description of the microcontroller is fully available in a software format. The
8 base station 218 of the current embodiment is based upon the commercially
9 available Spartan™ series of FPGAs from Xilinx, Inc., 2100 Logic Drive, San Jose,
10 CA 95124. The Verilog™ description can be used as the input to the FPGA design
11 and synthesis tools available from the FPGA manufacturer to realize the virtual
12 microcontroller 220 (generally after timing adjustments and other debugging).
13 Thus, design and realization of the FPGA implementation of an emulator for the
14 microcontroller (virtual microcontroller) or other device can be readily achieved by
15 use of the Verilog™ description along with circuitry to provide interfacing to the base
16 station and the device under test (DUT).

17 In the embodiment described in connection with **FIGURE 2**, the actual
18 production microcontroller 232 carries out its normal functions in the intended
19 application and passes I/O information and other information needed for debugging
20 to the FPGA 220. The virtual microcontroller 220 implemented within the FPGA of
21 base station 218 serves to provide the operator with visibility into the core processor
22 functions that are inaccessible in the production microcontroller 232. Thus, the
23 FPGA 220, by virtue of operating in lock-step operation with the microcontroller 232
24 provides an exact duplicate of internal registers, memory contents, interrupt vectors
25 and other useful debug information. Additionally, memory 222 can be used to store
26 information useful in trace operations that is gathered by the FPGA 220 during
27 execution of the program under test. This architecture, therefore, permits the
28 operator to have visibility into the inner workings of the microcontroller 232 without
29 need to provide special bondouts and expensive circuitry on the microcontroller
30 itself.

1 The base station 218's FPGA based virtual microcontroller 220, operating
2 under control of host computer 210, carries out the core processor functions of
3 microcontroller 232 and thus contains a functionally exact emulated copy of the
4 contents of the registers and memory of the real microcontroller 232. The ICE
5 system starts both microcontrollers (real and virtual) at the same time and keeps
6 them running in synchronization. The real microcontroller 232 sends I/O data to
7 the base station 218 (and in turn to the ICE software operating on the host
8 computer 210 if required) fast enough to keep the real microcontroller 232 and the
9 virtual microcontroller 220 of base station 218 in synchronization. Whenever the
10 system is halted (i.e., when the system is not emulating), other information such
11 as flash memory programming functions, test functions, etc. can be sent over the
12 interface.

13 Because the microcontroller 232 operates in synchronization with the virtual
14 microcontroller 220, less data needs to be sent over the four wire interface than
15 would be required in an ICE system otherwise. The type of data sent over the lines
16 is allowed to change depending on when the data is sent in the execution
17 sequence. In other words, depending on the execution sequence time, the
18 information over the data lines can be commands to the real microcontroller 232
19 or they can be data. Since the clock frequency of the real microcontroller 232 is
20 programmable, it copies its current clock on one of the lines of the four wire
21 interface. Moreover, the lock-step operation of the microcontroller 232 and the
22 virtual microcontroller 220 allows the virtual microcontroller 220 to not require
23 certain resources of the microcontroller 232 such as timers, counters, amplifiers,
24 etc. since they are fully implemented in the microcontroller 232. In addition, the
25 microcontroller 232 (or other DUT) can be debugged in real time without need for
26 extensive debug logic residing on the microcontroller 232, since all registers and
27 memory locations, etc. are available through the virtual microcontroller 220.

28 In the embodiment illustrated, the basic interface used is a four line interface
29 between microcontroller 232 and base station 218. This interface permits use of
30 a standard five wire Category Five patch cable to connect the microcontroller 232

1 and base station 218 in one embodiment, but of course, this is not to be considered
2 limiting. The four wire interface 226 of the present embodiment can be functionally
3 divided into two functional portions. A data transport portion 242 carries two data
4 lines in the current embodiment. A clock portion 246 carries a debug system clock
5 plus the microcontroller clock signal for the microcontroller 232. Three additional
6 lines are also provided (not shown) for supply, ground and a reset line. But, the
7 data transport portion 242 and the clock portion 246 are of primary interest, since
8 the supply and reset functions can be readily provided in any other suitable manner.

9 The two portions of the interface are implemented in the current embodiment
10 using four lines as described, however, in other embodiments, these two portions
11 can be implemented with as few as two wires. In the current embodiment, the
12 microcontroller clock signal can be varied by programming (even dynamically
13 during execution of a program). Therefore, it is desirable to have two clock signals
14 - the microcontroller clock to easily track the microcontroller clock timing as well
15 as a system clock that regulates the data transfer and other operations. However,
16 in other embodiments, particularly where a clock frequency is not changed
17 dynamically, a single clock can be used. The single clock can be multiplied or
18 divided as required to implement the required clocking signals.

19 The present embodiment using an eight bit microcontroller that only reads
20 eight bits at a time on any given I/O read. Thus, the present microcontroller 232
21 needs only to effect serializing and transferring a maximum of one eight bit I/O read
22 for each instruction cycle. This is easily accommodated using two data lines
23 transferring four bits each over four system clock cycles. However, using a clock
24 which is two times faster, a single line could equally well transfer the data in the
25 same time. Similarly, four lines could be used to transfer the same data in only two
26 clock cycles. In any case, the objective is to transfer the data in a short enough
27 time to permit the virtual microcontroller 220 to process the data and issue any
28 needed response before the next instruction cycle begins. The time required to
29 accomplish this is held at a minimum in the current invention, since the system

1 synchronization eliminates need for any overhead protocol for transmission of the
2 data.

3 The current embodiment of the invention uses a four line communication
4 interface and method of communicating between the FPGA within base station 218
5 (acting as a "virtual microcontroller" 220 or ICE) and the real microcontroller device
6 under test (microcontroller 232). The four line communication interface is time-
7 dependent so that different information can be transferred at different times over a
8 small number of communication lines. Moreover, since the two processors operate
9 in lockstep, there is no need to provide bus arbitration, framing, or other protocol
10 overhead to effect the communication between the microcontroller 232 and the
11 virtual microcontroller 220. This interface is used for, among other things,
12 transferring of I/O data from the microcontroller 232 to the FPGA 220 (since the
13 FPGA emulates only the core processor functions of the microcontroller in the
14 current embodiment). A first interface line (Data1) is a data line used by the
15 microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the FPGA based virtual microcontroller 220.
16 This line is also used to notify the FPGA 220 of pending interrupts. This Data1 line
17 is only driven by the real microcontroller 232. A second data line (Data2), which is
18 bidirectional, is used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the FPGA based
19 virtual microcontroller of base station 218. In addition, the FPGA 220 uses the
20 Data2 line to convey halt requests (i.e., to implement simple or complex
21 breakpoints) to the microcontroller 232.

22 A third interface line is a 24/48 Mhz debug system clock used to drive the
23 virtual microcontroller 220's communication state machines (the logic used within
24 the state controller to communicate with the microcontroller 232). In the current
25 embodiment, this clock always runs at 24 MHz unless the microcontroller 232's
26 internal clock is running at 24 Mhz. In this case the system clock switches to 48
27 Mhz. Of course, these exact clock speeds are not to be considered limiting, but are
28 presented as illustrative of the current exemplary embodiment. The fourth interface
29 line is the internal microcontroller clock from the microcontroller 232.

1 A fifth line can be used to provide a system reset signal to effect the
2 simultaneous startup of both microcontrollers. This fifth line provides a convenient
3 mechanism to reset the microcontrollers, but in most environments, the
4 simultaneous startup can also be effected in other ways including switching of
5 power. Sixth and Seventh lines are provided in the current interface to provide
6 power and ground for power supply.

7 The base station 218's virtual microcontroller 220 communicates with the
8 microcontroller 232 via four signal and clock lines forming a part of the four line
9 interface 226 forming a part of a seven wire connection as described below. The
10 interface signals travel over a short (e.g., one foot) of CAT5 network cable. The ICE
11 transmits break commands to the microcontroller 232 via the base station 218,
12 along with register read/write commands when the microcontroller 232 is halted.
13 The microcontroller 232 uses the interface to return register information when
14 halted, and to send I/O read, interrupt vector, and watchdog information while
15 running. The microcontroller 232 also sends a copy of its internal clocks for the
16 ICE. The four lines of the four line interface are the first four entries in the table
17 below. Each of the signals and their purpose is tabulated below in **TABLE 1**:
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	Signal Name	Signal Direction with Respect to Base Station 218	Description
U_HCLK (Data Clock)	In	24/48MHz data clock driven by microcontroller 232. This clock is used to drive the ICE virtual microcontroller communication state machines. This clock always runs at 24MHz, unless the U_CCLK clock is running at 24MHz — then it switches to 48MHz.	
U_CCLK (microcontroller Clock)	In	The internal microcontroller 232 CPU clock.	
U_D1_IRQ (Data1)	In	One of two data lines used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the ICE. This line is also used to notify the ICE of pending interrupts. This line is only driven by the microcontroller 232 (i.e., unidirectional).	
U_D0_BRQ (Data2)	In/Out	One of two data lines used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the ICE. The ICE uses this line to convey halt requests and other information to the microcontroller 232. This line is used for bi-directional communication.	
ICE POD RST	Out	Optional active high reset signal to microcontroller 232.	
ICE POD PW R	Out	Optional power supply to microcontroller 232.	
ICE POD GND	Out	Optional ground wire to microcontroller 232.	

TABLE 1

1 Synchronization between the microcontroller 232 and the virtual
2 microcontroller 220 is achieved by virtue of their virtually identical operation. They
3 are both started simultaneously by a power on or reset signal. They then track
4 each other's operation continuously executing the same instructions using the
5 same clocking signals. The system clock signal and the microcontroller clock
6 signal are shared between the two microcontrollers (real and virtual) so that even
7 if the microprocessor clock is changed during operation, they remain in lock-step.

8 In accordance with certain embodiments of the invention, a mechanism is
9 provided for allowing the FPGA 220 of base station 218 and the microcontroller 232
10 to stop at the same instruction in response to a breakpoint event (a break or halt).
11 The FPGA 220 has the ability monitor the microcontroller states of microcontroller
12 232 for a breakpoint event, due to its lock-step operation with microcontroller 232.
13 In the process of executing an instruction, an internal start of instruction cycle (SOI)
14 signal is generated (by both microcontrollers) that indicates that the device is about
15 to execute a next instruction. If a breakpoint signal (a halt or break signal - the
16 terms "halt" and "break" are used synonymously herein) is generated by the FPGA,
17 the execution of the microcontroller 232 can be stopped at the SOI signal point
18 before the next instruction starts.

19 Although the SOI signal is labeled as a signal indicating the start of an
20 instruction, the SOI signal is used for multiple purposes in the present
21 microcontroller. It is not required that the SOI signal actually indicate a start of
22 instruction for many purposes, merely that there be a convenient time reference on
23 which to base certain actions. For example, any reference signal that always takes
24 place prior to execution of an instruction can be used as a time reference for
25 reading a halt command. Accordingly, any such available or generated reference
26 signal can be used equivalently as a "halt read" signal without departing from the
27 present invention. That notwithstanding, the SOI signal is conveniently used in the
28 current embodiment and will be used as a basis for the explanation that follows, but
29 should not be considered limiting.

1 Logic within the FPGA 220 of base station 218 allows not only for
2 implementation of simple breakpoint events, but also for producing breakpoints as
3 a result of very complex events. By way of example, and not limitation, a
4 breakpoint can be programmed to occur when a program counter reaches 0x0030,
5 an I/O write is happening and the stack pointer is about to overflow. Other such
6 complex breakpoints can readily be programmed to assist in the process of
7 debugging. Complex breakpoints are allowed, in part, also because the virtual
8 microcontroller 220 has time to carry out complex computations and comparisons
9 after receipt of I/O data transfers from the microcontroller 232 and before the next
10 instruction commences. After the receipt of I/O data from the microcontroller 232,
11 the FPGA 220 of base station 218 has a relatively long amount of computation time
12 to determine if a breakpoint event has occurred or not. In the event a breakpoint
13 has occurred, the microcontroller 232 can be halted and the host processor 210 is
14 informed.

15 An advantage of this process is that the FPGA 220 and the microcontroller
16 232 can be stopped at the same time in response to a breakpoint event. Another
17 advantage is that complex and robust breakpoint events are allowed while still
18 maintaining breakpoint synchronization between the two devices. These
19 advantages are achieved with minimal specialized debugging logic (to send I/O
20 data over the interface) and without special bond-out circuitry being required in the
21 microcontroller device under test 232.

22 Normal operation of the current microcontroller is carried out in a cycle of
23 two distinct stages or phases as illustrated in connection with **FIGURE 3**. The
24 cycle begins with the initial startup or reset of both the microcontroller 232 and the
25 virtual microcontroller 220 at 304. Once both microcontrollers are started in
26 synchronism, the data phase 310 is entered in which serialized data is sent from
27 the microcontroller to the virtual microcontroller. At the start of this phase the
28 internal start of instruction (SOI) signal signifies the beginning of this phase will
29 commence with the next low to high transition of the system clock. In the current
30 embodiment, this data phase lasts four system clock cycles, but this is only

1 intended to be exemplary and not limiting. The SOI signal further indicates that any
2 I/O data read on the previous instruction is now latched into a register and can be
3 serialized and transmitted to the virtual microcontroller. Upon the start of the data
4 phase 310, any such I/O read data (eight bits of data in the current embodiment)
5 is serialized into two four bit nibbles that are transmitted using the Data0 and Data1
6 lines of the current interface data portion 242. One bit is transmitted per data line
7 at the clock rate of the system clock. Thus, all eight bits are transmitted in the four
8 clock cycles of the data transfer phase.

9 At the end of the four clock cycle data transfer phase in the current
10 embodiment, the control phase 318 begins. During this control phase, which in the
11 current embodiment may be as short as two microcontroller clock periods (or as
12 long as about fourteen clock periods, depending upon the number of cycles
13 required to execute an instruction), the microcontroller 232 can send interrupt
14 requests, interrupt data, and watchdog requests. Additionally, the virtual
15 microcontroller 220 can issue halt (break) commands. If a halt command is issued,
16 it is read by the microcontroller at the next SOI signal. Once the control phase
17 ends, the data transfer phase repeats. If there is no data to transfer, data1 and
18 data2 remain idle (e.g., at a logic low state). To simplify the circuitry, I/O bus data
19 are sent across the interface on every instruction, even if it is not a bus transfer.
20 Since the virtual microcontroller 220 is operating in synchronization with
21 microcontroller 232 and executing the same instructions, the emulation system
22 knows that data transferred during non I/O read transfers can be ignored.

23 **FIGURE 4** shows this operational cycle from the perspective of the virtual
24 microcontroller 220. During the data transfer phase 310, the serialized data is
25 received over Data0 and Data1. It should be noted that prior to receipt of this I/O
26 data, the microcontroller 232 has already had access to this data for several clock
27 cycles and has already taken action on the data. However, until receipt of the I/O
28 read data during the data transfer phase 310, the virtual microcontroller 220 has not
29 had access to the data. Thus, upon receipt of the I/O read data during the data
30 phase 310, the virtual microcontroller 220 begins processing the data to catch up

1 with the existing state of microcontroller 232. Moreover, once the I/O data has been
2 read, the host computer 210 or virtual microcontroller 220 may determine that a
3 complex or simple breakpoint has been reached and thus need to issue a break
4 request. Thus, the virtual microcontroller should be able to process the data quickly
5 enough to make such determinations and issue a break request prior to the next
6 SOI. Break requests are read at the internal SOI signal, which also serves as a
7 convenient reference time marker that indicates that I/O data has been read and
8 is available for transmission by the microcontroller 232 to the virtual microcontroller
9 220.

10 By operating in the manner described, any breakpoints can be guaranteed
11 to occur in a manner such that both the virtual microcontroller 220 and the
12 microcontroller 232 halt operation in an identical state. Moreover, although the
13 virtual microcontroller 220 and the microcontroller 232 operate on I/O data obtained
14 at different times, both microcontrollers are in complete synchronization by the time
15 each SOI signal occurs. Thus, the virtual microcontroller 220 and the
16 microcontroller 232 can be said to operate in lock-step with respect to a common
17 time reference of the SOI signal as well as with respect to execution of any
18 particular instruction within a set of instructions being executed by both virtual
19 microcontroller 220 and the microcontroller 232.

20 A transfer of I/O data as just described is illustrated with reference to the
21 timing diagram of **FIGURE 5**. After the microcontroller 232 completes an I/O read
22 instruction, it sends the read data back to the base station 218 to the virtual
23 microcontroller, since the virtual microcontroller 220 of the present embodiment
24 implements only the core processor functions (and not the I/O functions). The ICE
25 system can expect the incoming data stream for an I/O read to commence with the
26 first positive edge of U_HCLK (the debug or system clock) when SOI signal for the
27 following instruction is at a predetermined logic level (e.g., a logic high). Thus, at
28 time T1, the SOI signal makes a transition to a logic high and one system clock
29 cycle later at time T2, the data transfer phase 310 begins. This timing allows the
30 ICE system to get the read data to the emulated accumulator of base station 218

1 before it is needed by the next instruction's execution. Note that the first SOI pulse
2 shown in **FIGURE 5** represents the first SOI following the I/O read instruction (but
3 could be any suitable reference time signal). Transfer of the data from the
4 microcontroller 232 is carried out using the two data lines (data2 and data1, shown
5 as U_D0_BRK and U_D1_IRQ) with each line carrying four bits of an eight bit word.
6 During this data transfer phase 310, an eight bit transfer representing the I/O read
7 data can take place from the microcontroller 232 to the base station 210 in the four
8 clock cycles between T2 and T3. The control phase 318 starts at time T3 and
9 continues until the beginning of the next data transfer phase 310. The SOI signal
10 at T4 indicates that the next data transfer phase is about to start and serves as a
11 reference time to read the data2 line to detect the presence of any halt signal from
12 the virtual microcontroller 220. The current control phase 318 ends at T5 and the
13 next data transfer phase 310 begins.

14 The base station 218 only transmits break (halt) commands to the
15 microcontroller 232 during the control phase. After the microcontroller 232 is halted
16 in response to the break command, the interface can be used to implement
17 memory / register read / write commands. The halt command is read at the SOI
18 signal transition (T1 or T4). The microcontroller 232 uses the interface to return
19 register information when halted, and to send I/O read, interrupt vector and
20 watchdog timer information while running.

21 To summarize, a break is handled as follows: The ICE asserts U_D0_BRQ
22 (break) to stop the microcontroller 232. When the ICE asserts the break, the
23 microcontroller 232 reads it at the SOI transition to high and stops. The ICE assert
24 breaks during the control phase. The microcontroller 232 samples the U_D0_BRQ
25 line at the rising edge of SOI (at T4) to determine if a break is to take place. After
26 halting, the ICE may issue commands over the U_D0_BRQ line to query the status
27 of various registers and memory locations of the virtual microcontroller or carry out
28 other functions.

29 In the case of an interrupt, if an interrupt request is pending for the
30 microcontroller 232, the system asserts U_D1_IRQ as an interrupt request during

1 the control phase of the microcontroller 232. Since the interrupt signal comes to
2 the virtual microcontroller 220 from the microcontroller 232 during the control
3 phase, the virtual microcontroller 220 knows the timing of the interrupt signal going
4 forward. That is, the interrupt signal is the synchronizing event rather than the SOI
5 signal. In case of an interrupt, there is no SOI, because the microcontroller 232
6 performs special interrupt processing including reading the current interrupt vector
7 from the interrupt controller. Since program instructions are not being executed
8 during the interrupt processing, there is no data / control phase. The virtual
9 microcontroller 220 expects the interrupt vector to be passed at a deterministic time
10 across the interface during this special interrupt processing and before execution
11 of instructions proceeds. Since the virtual microcontroller 220 of the current
12 embodiment does not implement an interrupt controller, interrupt vectors are read
13 from the interrupt controller upon receipt of an interrupt request over the interface.
14 The interrupt vector data is passed over the interface using the two data lines as
15 with the I/O read data, following the assertion of an internal microcontroller IVR_N
16 (active low) signal during the control phase. In the current embodiment, an
17 interrupt cycle is approximately 10 clock cycles long. Since the interrupt service
18 cycle is much longer than the time required to transfer the current interrupt vector,
19 the data is easily transferred using the two data lines, with no particular timing
20 issues.

21 If the microcontroller 232 undergoes a watchdog reset, it asserts the IRQ
22 (interrupt) and BRQ (break) lines indefinitely. The ICE detects this condition and
23 further detects that the microcontroller clock has stopped. This is enough to
24 establish that a watchdog reset has occurred. The ICE applies an external reset,
25 and notifies the ICE software in the host computer 210.

26 Referring now to the block diagram of **FIGURE 6**, the interface between the
27 host processor 210 and the base station 218 of a preferred embodiment of the
28 present invention is illustrated. In this embodiment, the connection between the
29 host processor 210 and the FPGA 220 is advantageously provided using a standard
30 IEEE 1284 parallel printer cable 214 with communication carried out using a

1 modification of standard EPP (enhanced parallel port) communication protocol. Of
2 particular interest in this communication interface is the data strobe connection
3 412, the INIT (initialize) connection 416 and the eight data connections (data line
4 0 through data line 7) 420. These connection are directly connected to the FPGA
5 with the INIT connection connected to the FPGA RESET pin. The data strobe line
6 412 is connected to the FPGA configuration clock input and the eight data lines 420
7 are connected to data input pins of the FPGA.

8 When the software on the host is started, the INIT connection 416 is driven
9 by the host computer 210 to a logic low causing the FPGA to clear its configuration
10 memory 424 and begin receiving configuration data. The configuration data is
11 stored in configuration memory to define the functionality of the FPGA. This
12 configuration data is clocked in eight bits at a time over the data lines 420 using the
13 data strobe signal as a clock signal. That is, an eight bit word is placed on the
14 interface data lines 420 by host processor 210 followed by toggling the data strobe
15 line to clock the data into the FPGA 220. This unidirectional data transfer from the
16 host computer incorporates a set of design parameters that configure the circuitry
17 of the FPGA 220 to function, in part, as a standard IEEE 1284 EPP interface once
18 the FPGA 220 is programmed and functional. This programming configures the
19 FPGA 220 to have an IEEE 1284 EPP interface with the data lines 420 connected
20 to the FPGA as bidirectional data lines, the configuration clock configured to
21 operate as the IEEE 1284 data clock line connected to data strobe 412 and the INIT
22 line 416 continues to drive the FPGA clear and reset function.

23 Data transfer continues in this manner until the FPGA 220 is fully
24 programmed by virtue of having received the correct amount of data required by the
25 particular FPGA 220 used in base station 218. Thus, each time the host software
26 is initialized, a data transfer to the FPGA 220 occurs to program the FPGA 220 to
27 function in its capacity of a virtual microcontroller (in this embodiment). Once
28 programming ceases, the FPGA 220 "wakes up" as a virtual microcontroller (or
29 whatever device is programmed into the FPGA 220 in general) and begins to
30 function as the virtual microcontroller. At this point, the interface 214 ceases to

1 function as a unidirectional programming interface and begins to function as a
2 bidirectional communication interface using the programmed operation of the
3 FPGA 220 communicating through its programmed IEEE 1248 EPP parallel
4 communication interface.

5 In the virtual microcontroller mode of operation of the FPGA 220,
6 communication is carried out using the eight data lines 420 as bidirectional data
7 lines compliant with IEEE 1284 EPP parallel communication protocol with the data
8 strobe line 412 used as a data clock and the INIT line 416 continuing to act as a
9 clear and reset signal. INIT line 416 can thus be used to reinitialize the
10 programming of the FPGA 220, for example, to revise a design parameter or to
11 simply restart the ICE system. **TABLE 2** below summarizes the significant
12 connections of this interface.
13

Interface Lines	Program Mode Function	Free Running "Awake" Mode Function
Data bits 0 through 7	Unidirectional data into the FPGA	Bidirectional EPP compliant communication
Data Strobe	Unidirectional programming clock	EPP Compliant Data Strobe
INIT	Low signal indicates clear configuration memory and prepare to receive new configuration data	Low signal indicates clear configuration memory and enter programming mode - prepare to receive new configuration data

18 **TABLE 2**
19

20 The programming and communication process between the host 210 and
21 the FPGA 220 is described in flow chart 500 of **FIGURE 7** starting at 502. The host
22 software is loaded and initialized at 506, and asserts a logic low on the INIT line
23 416 to signal a reset and clearing of the FPGA 220's configuration memory 424 at
24 510. In response to this signal, the FPGA 220 clears configuration memory 424 at

1 514. The Host computer 210 then begins transferring a new set of configuration
2 parameters to the FPGA 220 at 520 by strobing data into the FPGA's configuration
3 memory 424. This set of configuration parameters configures the FPGA 220 to
4 have an IEEE 1284 EPP compliant communication interface. In other
5 embodiments, other modes of communication could also be used (e.g., extended
6 communication port (ECP) or serial communications) could be used without
7 departing from the invention.

8 This process continues at 526 until all data are transferred at 530. The
9 FPGA 220 then wakes up to operate with the new configuration parameters stored
10 in configuration memory 424 at 534. The FPGA 220 continues to operate as
11 configured at 538 until such time as the INIT line 416 is again asserted by the Host
12 computer 210 at 544. Control then returns to 514 where the FPGA 220 is cleared
13 and the reprogramming process proceeds as previously described.

14 Using this mechanism, the FPGA 220 can be coupled to the host computer
15 210 using a single interface 214 for both programming the FPGA 220 and for later
16 communication with the FPGA 220 operating as the virtual microcontroller. This
17 avoids use of multiple interface connections and/or use of a separate processor to
18 handle details associated with configuration programming and communication with
19 the FPGA 220.

20 The present invention provides for full in-circuit emulation without need for
21 a special bond-out version of a DUT. This is accomplished using a minimal
22 amount of design embedded within the DUT itself. In the current embodiment, the
23 only functionality required of the production microcontroller itself is to provide for
24 transfer of data over two lines forming the data portion of the interface and reading
25 commands for break, watchdog and interrupt functions received over the same two
26 data lines. These provisions are simple to implement, and use minimal circuitry.
27 The two additional pinouts used for this function were readily accommodated in the
28 eight bit microcontroller of the current invention. Moreover, the use of a single
29 standard IEEE 1284 printer cable interface between the virtual microcontroller and
30 the host computer to provide both FPGA programming and communication

1 between the ICE system and the Host processor provides for a simple and versatile
2 implementation.

3 While the present embodiment is implemented using a processor that does
4 not use pipelined instructions, this is not to be considered limiting. As long as
5 adequate time is available to serialize and transmit data over the interface, the
6 present interface and break management techniques could equally well be
7 implemented in a pipelined processor.

8 Those skilled in the art will understand that although the current invention
9 has been explained in terms of providing in-circuit emulation of the core processing
10 functions of a microcontroller. However, the present invention can be realized for
11 any complex electronic device for which in-circuit emulation is needed including,
12 but not limited to, microprocessors and other complex large scale integration
13 devices without limitation. Moreover, although the mechanism for use of the
14 interface between the host processor and the FPGA has been described in the
15 environment of an ICE system, this should not be considered limiting since this
16 interface mechanism can be used for other systems requiring FPGA programming
17 and communication functions over a single interface.

18 Those skilled in the art will recognize that the present invention has been
19 described in terms of exemplary embodiments based upon use of a programmed
20 processor. However, the invention should not be so limited, since the present
21 invention could be implemented using hardware component equivalents such as
22 special purpose hardware and/or dedicated processors which are equivalents to
23 the invention as described and claimed. Similarly, general purpose computers,
24 microprocessor based computers, micro-controllers, optical computers, analog
25 computers, dedicated processors and/or dedicated hard wired logic may be used
26 to construct alternative equivalent embodiments of the present invention.

27 Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the program steps and associated
28 data used to implement the embodiments described above can be implemented
29 using disc storage as well as other forms of storage such as for example Read
30 Only Memory (ROM) devices, Random Access Memory (RAM) devices; optical

1 storage elements, magnetic storage elements, magneto-optical storage elements,
2 flash memory, core memory and/or other equivalent storage technologies without
3 departing from the present invention. Such alternative storage devices should be
4 considered equivalents.

5 The present invention, as described in embodiments herein, is implemented
6 using a programmed processor executing programming instructions that are
7 broadly described above in flow chart form that can be stored on any suitable
8 electronic storage medium or transmitted over any suitable electronic
9 communication medium. However, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the
10 processes described above can be implemented in any number of variations and
11 in many suitable programming languages without departing from the present
12 invention. For example, the order of certain operations carried out can often be
13 varied, additional operations can be added or operations can be deleted without
14 departing from the invention. Error trapping can be added and/or enhanced and
15 variations can be made in user interface and information presentation without
16 departing from the present invention. Such variations are contemplated and
17 considered equivalent.

18 While the invention has been described in conjunction with specific
19 embodiments, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications, permutations and
20 variations will become apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the foregoing
21 description. Accordingly, it is intended that the present invention embrace all such
22 alternatives, modifications and variations as fall within the scope of the appended
23 claims.

24 What is claimed is:
25